

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
(Adopted 3/28/05)

**PRESENTATION, SPECIAL SESSION & WORKSESSION
OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Tuesday, February 22, 2005

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

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| Mayor Porter | City Manager Matthews |
| Councilmember Austin-Lane | City Clerk Waters |
| Councilmember Barry | ECD Director Daines |
| Councilmember Elrich | Recreation Director Haiduven |
| Councilmember Mizeur | Library Director Arnold-Robbins |
| Councilmember Seamens | Assistant Public Works Director Braithwaite |
| Councilmember Williams | |

The City Council convened at 7:40 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember Austin-Lane noted that at the Old Town Residents Association meeting this past week, there was a great concern expressed about the crosswalk on Philadelphia Avenue, leading to the Library. A number of related proposals for remedies were identified.

Mayor Porter expressed appreciation for receipt of the report of the Safe Roadways Committee. She spent most of her afternoon in Annapolis testifying in on pedestrian safety issues (e.g., speed camera legislation). Governor Erlich's administration testified in opposition. She also testified on legislation that would add additional points on moving violations, resulting in new funds.

Councilmember Barry commented that the pedestrian crossing lights at Sligo/New Hampshire appear to be close to restoration. He described the improvements in the lighting design, adding that it is a dangerous area. The lesson learned is to use the City's good contacts to coordinate with the state and other entities to get issues resolved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jean Craig, Carroll Avenue commented about the sidewalk on her block of Carroll Avenue, noting the general support for the design. She wants the materials tested. Questions were raised about the safety of the surface and its durability (i.e., if things were dropped on the surface). Questions were raised about responsibility for repairs/maintenance and the liability. On another issue, the yellow line is non-existent.

PRESENTATION

1. Community Center Construction Project.

City Manager Matthews remarked that there are a number of PCO's still under negotiation. She will provide more information at next week's meeting. She remarked about the Charron contract and the work that has been required, which has resulted in an extension of the contract. The extension requires further approval by the Council. She will be asking that the Council consider this extension, noting that in an effort to keep the cost as low as possible, Geryl will be including one of her assistants to help with the completion of the project evaluation. She stated that the CO for the 5 inches of concrete would be estimated at \$50,000.

Councilmember Seamens asked how the cost of the pavers compares to the cost of concrete.

Ms. Matthews said that from memory, the pavers were estimated (several months ago) at about \$75,000.

SPECIAL SESSION

2. Resolution re: Takoma Park Equality Day.

Councilmember Mizeur explained the mission of the effort, remarking about the local yard signage which turned into an effort to develop a professional approach to create signs and promote distribution. Local merchants have designated space and have offered other promotions (Motion seconded by Williams).

Councilmember Williams stated that he has been involved in other levels of support at the county and state levels to address these issues. It is an important time to acknowledge these things.

Ms. Porter thanked those who put this project together. It is a wonderful expression of support for all of those in the community.

Ms. Austin-Lane said that she is happy to add her support and is looking forward to the "Buster" showing on PBS.

Mr. Barry added support. The basic issue may well become a fight in our country.

Sherry Vericino, Circle Avenue introduced the neighbors of Hampshire Knolls who started the sign effort. City residents have embraced the message of the signs. She thanked the Council for its support of marriage rights for all citizens and urged support for this resolution.

Lisa Shaw, Circle Avenue echoed previous remarks and the comments expressed by members of the Council, regarding the prior resolution. This issue affects all of us in different but very

important ways. She noted the rally held in Annapolis the other evening. The resolution is appreciated.

Renee Robb stated that there are many in the community who are supportive (gay and straight, preferences). Takoma Park values all of our neighbors and our care for the community and its children.

Bill Blanch, Philadelphia Avenue said that he is proud of our neighborhood. It is important for us to be a beacon of light for our Nation. He supported the resolution.

Resolution #2005-10 (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams).

RESOLUTION #2005-10 (Attached)

WORKSESSION

3. Carroll Avenue Sidewalk Art Project.

Randy Cohen (Chair of Arts & Humanities Commission (AHC)). He noted the presence of Alice Sims, Bodem Meloney, and ECD Director Sara Daines). He provided an explanation of the project and the evolution of the RFP, remarking about the evaluation of the art (e.g., durability, content, design, etc.). It involved review by the City's engineer and the public. He commented on the scope of the publication of the proposals. People were delighted that they were asked for their comments. We are putting forward this proposal of art as described in the agenda item materials.

Mr. Seamens said that the public testimony was most important. The focus was on durability. Mr. Cohen responded that durability is one of the things that we examine. He commented on the durability of tiles that are embedded in sidewalks and roads in other jurisdictions. For day-to-day use, he would expect that they would hold up.

Bodem Meloney remarked that there is some expectation that the City's Engineer will assist in maintenance. Any time that a City puts art in the public, if you want it to be "safe", you do not put anything outside—it will change over time. Recognizably, there is a certain modern risk.

Mr. Seamens said that he tried to observe tiles in other locations and for the most part, they are durable. Have you reached a plan about the design of the tiles?

Alice Sims commented that they had someone from GSA and the Smithsonian, both familiar with public art, provide input. The artist would use a range of colors in tiles, and the tiles would taper-out at the end of the project area. She suggested that we use a variety of colors, similar to the sample that is being displayed.

Mr. Seamens stated that he regrets that the Council did not focus the AHC on the Gateway/Wayfinder Sign Program.

Ms. Meloney stated that they will later be coming to the Council with further public art proposals.

Ms. Porter thanked the AHC for their work on this issue. How will the installation be done?

Ms. Sims explained that the tiles will be away from the traffic lane. They will be in the sidewalk and flanked on each side by concrete with grout fixing the tiles.

Ms. Porter noted the comments forwarded by residents. Could the tiles be pulled out of the sidewalk?

Ms. Sims responded that it would be difficult—about as easy as chipping a tile out of your kitchen flooring.

Ms. Porter questioned who is responsible for repair of damage.

Ms. Matthews stated that it would be the City's responsibility.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked about a maintenance and replacement plan.

Mr. Williams commented that the artist will provide extra tiles which can be stored and used in the future.

Ms. Porter again, expressed appreciation for the work of the AHC, noting that the Council will consider the resolution next week which would implement the plan.

4. Arts and Humanities Commission.

Mr. Cohen stated that the AHC is happy with the current membership size of fifteen (15), and would ask that the Council hold off on further appointments until the end of work on the implementation plan. He suggested that vacancy advertisements be held until April with appointments in June. The AHC will be presenting a draft community cultural plan to the Council.

Ms. Porter said that she looks forward to the cultural plan.

BREAK - The Council recessed for a scheduled break at 8:26 p.m. and later reconvened.

5. Community Center Operations.

Ms. Matthews introduced the presentation, identifying the presenters – Recreation Director Haiduven, Librarian Director Arnold-Robbins, and Assistant Public Works Director Braithwaite. The focus will be on the community plaza level (current, main level). Staff will focus on the operational costs and will remark about revenue generation. We would request that in the next couple of weeks, the Council find time to have a more in-depth discussion of revenues.

Recreation Director Haiduven framed the discussion for the evening--review the community plaza level layout (CPL); discuss opportunities for programming; outline operational and start-up costs; and introduce revenue decision making points. The information presented is available in handouts and on the web site. She referred to the overview drawing (i.e., layout of the main floor – phase I and II). She remarked about the art room, multi-purpose room, three meeting rooms and conference room. She described Phase II elements (i.e., teen hangout room, game room, dance room, theater, and reception area). The conference room will be available to the public and also for rentals.

Mr. Seamens stated that the computer center looks different than what he recalls from original plans.

Ms. Haiduven responded that the design has not changed since the beginning of the project. Differences may be in the titles for the rooms. She remarked about the reception area, its function and importance.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked how people will enter from the back of the building and be directed to the reception desk.

Ms. Haiduven responded.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned how staff will educate the public about “direction” in the building.

Ms. Haiduven explained that it will be a process over time.

Mr. Barry questioned if there are enough restrooms if the building is fully engaged.

Ms. Haiduven stated that the architects have satisfied the permitting requirements.

Mr. Seamens recalled having previously heard that we have more than enough restrooms to meet requirements.

Ms. Haiduven identified the current programs and the programs that will take place in the new space. We will still need to rent the school gym for summer camp programs. She commented on the new programs--dance room, classrooms, teen room, art room, senior room, game room, theater, and multi-purpose areas. She noted a correction to the flowchart slide. There should be a fourth box in the chart. She explained the current staff and the new employees who would be required to operate the computer learning center. Staff is recommending 1.35 new FTE's in the Recreation Department (based on a 54 hour/work week). For the computer center, there would

be an additional 0.88 FTE's. She explained the anticipated community center schedule (77 hours a week), and remarked about contractors.

Library Director Arnold-Robbins remarked about the computer module that is currently in the library. It has been there about six months and is well used. She commented on the purpose of the computer learning center and identified the proposed equipment. She stated the goals that were the basis for the planning process, and described some of the aspects of a (Linux based) "Useful" system. She noted the proposed operation hours (pubic access rooms - 50 hours/week; and Medial Lab - 35 hours/week). She commented on public access, after school use and classes. We envision classes being taught in conjunction with Montgomery College or volunteers. This is an area to further investigate.

Ms. Haiduven commented that the discussion of the media lab (teen and senior rooms) has really evolved. The main goal is to bring the youth into the building. She remarked about the senior room, adding comments about the staffing of the media lab.

Ms. Arnold-Robbins further remarked about the hours of operation and staffing.

Ms. Haiduven explained the basis of the projected costs.

Ms. Braithwaite commented on building maintenance, custodial staff and utility costs. The projected annual maintenance costs represent new costs.

Ms. Haiduven summarized the estimated additional costs of \$265,637.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned whether the annual budget should include anticipated replacements.

Ms. Haiduven said that this has been a long discussion among staff, who believe that the Equipment Replacement Reserve (ERR) will be where this is reflected.

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked that this summary page should show the replacement costs.

Ms. Arnold-Robbins commented on the initial purchase of the equipment and the 3-year replacement cycle.

Ms. Matthews acknowledged Ms. Austin-Lane's point.

Ms. Haiduven referred to a summary of the furnishings for the building and estimated costs (total start-up cost of \$149,942). We can purchase furniture at the county's rate. The original estimated was about \$300,000.

Ms. Matthews touched on some of the issues that the Council will be asked to provide direction, related to revenues. She noted the fundraising efforts of the Takoma Foundation. The last report she heard was that the foundation had commitments of \$115,000. She remarked about

alternatives to address the shortfall (e.g., funding from the City's budget or (not recommended) not furnishing certain rooms). She continued comments about revenue opportunities—programs and memberships, grants, concessions, partnerships and rentals. She framed some of the decision making points, as follows: (1) Philosophy of mission? Do we wish to maximize revenues? Do we wish to maximize service (low fees and rental rates)? She has surveyed areas about rental rates, and there are a variety of structures. The City's rates appear somewhat low. (2) Are our rental rates appropriate? (3) What is the revenue policy of cost recovery (e.g., youth programs are subsidized, and adult programs recover direct costs)? Should a cost recovery goal be established? (4) What is the priority of use among various groups? (5) With respect to non-resident fees, staff is exploring the county's expectations about how we move forward with a rate structure.

Ms. Porter thanked staff for the tremendous amount of information presented this evening. There is a great deal of material that she found extremely helpful. Clearly, the result of a lot of work.

Mr. Seamens expressed appreciation for all of the comprehensive information. It must have taken a great deal of time. When he spoke with some county contacts, he was told that the replacement costs were higher than we are anticipating. He wants to ensure that this is examined carefully. With respect to insurance, has staff looked at liability insurance?

Ms. Matthews responded that liability considerations have been explored Deputy Manager Hobbs.

Mr. Seamens asked if staff has looked at transportation costs.

Ms. Haiduven responded that we have included another van in the ERR over the past few years. The purchase has been repeatedly postponed. Addressing the transport of seniors is more complicated, as it would require a van with a lift (more expensive); however, it is needed.

Mr. Seamens said that we should consider these replacement costs. A number of the proposed programs overlap some existing activities/businesses in the city. We might talk with them about partnering, so as not to compete.

Ms. Haiduven remarked about discussions with the House of Musical Traditions, which was interested in moving their "Coffee House" time to the community center. In terms of dance, we would provide introductory instruction.

Mr. Barry suggested that we look at new square footage and the planned adult programs that are proposed. We could use these as a baseline and then consider other items in the context of discussions about program fees.

Ms. Haiduven stated that one of the variables is the level of participation in the programs.

Mr. Barry commented that another variable will be the marketing of the programs. Transportation is important. Is it possible to re-route public bus routes?

Mr. Williams said he has some thoughts on potential rental of the atrium for some types of events. Do other places do that and what do they charge?

Ms. Haiduven acknowledged his interesting question. The county has a mechanism for filing for a liquor license for an event, which may enhance the interest in renting the space.

Ms. Austin-Lane remarked that she would appreciate the Council being involved in the exploration of the management of the space. She is worried that if we set a policy and fall short, the city will be left holding the bag. She wants to see the building come on-line with a professional manager to market the center's programs and ensure that the Council's policy for the building is implemented. She has heard these type of comments from residents. We should allocate a position to implement the new center's activities.

Ms. Haiduven commented that this fits into the philosophy that we are recommending, particularly if we pursue some changes in the fee structure that increases revenues.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked about the timeline for decision-making points.

Ms. Porter said that she is trying to get a continued discussion on the agenda as soon as possible, but wants to allow enough time for the Council to discuss the issues. She would anticipate a full discussion regarding the revenue philosophy when the item is scheduled.

Ms. Matthews said that if the question is "when the Council needs to make a decision on the revenue items", it would be helpful to have some direction from the Council by May or June.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned what will be completed by that time.

Ms. Haiduven responded that the front portion of the building will be completed.

Ms. Matthews commented that we are still looking at April for completion of our immediate space. She remarked about bidding for some of the green space items. Once we have bids, we can proceed with the plaza level space (construction to likely start in the summer). We are then looking at about a 4-month construction schedule.

Mr. Williams recalled a discussion about eight years ago related to the current revenue philosophy. Any notes from that discussion would be helpful.

Mr. Elrich asked about any early plans for how we deal with community associations and other groups (in terms of a list of priorities).

Ms. Haiduven noted that we have a list of contacts. When we open the doors, we will initially

move our programs back into the building. We have worked hard to accommodate everyone, but have had to turn some away for lack of space.

Mr. Elrich suggested that we let these groups know about the likely schedule for opening the space and continue to maintain communication with a variety of groups.

Ms. Haiduven agreed. The next discussion will be the starting point. Staff needs the Council's direction on the revenue philosophy.

Mr. Elrich said that staff should go ahead and identify the needs of associations. He wants to make sure that we are planning and are aware of these needs from the opening.

Ms. Porter remarked that one of the first requests we got was a place for teens. She is glad to see this as a priority. One of the other two priorities was for a space for community groups to meet. The other thing was that the arts groups were interested in the existing chambers for activities. One of the main purposes from the beginning was to accommodate members of the community for things they need.

Mr. Elrich questioned the source of the money for the new equipment in the multi-purpose room. Are they dedicated funds?

Mr. Williams noted the cable money. We are moving into what is otherwise a public space. We are downscaling.

Mr. Elrich remarked that he is fascinated by the notion that this space (Council Chambers), which is hardly used, will have a such a great demand that it could not accommodate a Council meeting.

Mr. Seamens agreed.

Ms. Haiduven noted that staff has already discussed that no activities will take place in this room on Monday nights, in the event that there is a large Council meeting which requires the space.

Ms. Porter asked for further clarification.

Mr. Williams said he wants information on the available cable monies, involved in the construction of the multi-purpose room, and information about any flexibility in how the dollars are spent.

Ms. Haiduven explained why this room is not marketable.

Ms. Porter suggested that the Council further pursue this discussion at the time of the next Council discussion.

Mr. Seamens emphasized Mr. Elrich's concerns. He would like to see a Town Hall meeting held here on the week of May 18th. One room for the meeting and another for childcare. We should start with some forward thinking.

Ms. Mizeur asked what group of teens are being surveyed—those who are currently involved in recreation programs? Is there any outreach to the harder to reach communities?

Ms. Haiduven recognized the point, suggesting that perhaps, we should formulate some approach beyond the teens who are currently involved.

Ms. Mizeur remarked about her conversations with teens during her campaign for election and their desires. She received feedback to not call it a "Teen Hang-Out Room." In the future, she would like a similar presentation, as tonight's, about the plans related to eventual construction of the gym.

Ms. Haiduven said that the citizen liaison committee is still active and has done some of the work that has been described. She understands the request.

Mr. Barry encouraged public philanthropy. Would we consider naming rooms after individual philanthropists?

Mr. Elrich said that it is a good idea.

Ms. Porter recalled the 8-year, prior discussion of rental fees and the concerns that were raised about how treat religious groups (with respect to use of space).

ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SESSION

Ms. Porter announced the Council's intention to hold a session next Monday at 6:30 p.m. to continue discussions of the City Manager's evaluation.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned for the evening at 10:35 p.m.